

CULTURAL IMPACT ON ISLAMIC MATRIMONIAL BELIEFS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND QATAR

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Received: October 3, 2022

Accepted: November 15, 2022

Abstract

People from distinct cultural backgrounds practice Islam. The general impact of culture over religion, including Islam, has been well documented. The current study specifically focused on marriage-related Islamic beliefs and intended to analyze the impact of culture in this regard by comparing Pakistani and Qatari Muslims. The study involved 519 participants from Pakistan and Qatar. A specific questionnaire was designed for the current study in Urdu and Arabic. It comprised 26 items and covered various Islamic matrimonial beliefs. The findings revealed that the marital beliefs of Qatari Muslims were significantly closer to the authentic Islamic beliefs than those of Pakistani Muslims. The current study's findings reflected the impact of indigenous culture on the marriage-related beliefs of Pakistani Muslims.

Islam diamalkan oleh orang-orang dari latar belakang budaya yang berbeda. Kesan umum budaya terhadap agama, termasuk Islam, telah didokumentasikan dengan baik. Kajian ini secara khusus memberi tumpuan kepada kepercayaan Islam berkaitan perkawinan dan bertujuan untuk menganalisis kesan budaya

dalam hal ini dengan membandingkan Muslim Pakistan dan Qatar. Kajian itu melibatkan 519 peserta dari Pakistan dan Qatar. Suatu angket khusus telah dirancang untuk kajian ini dalam bahasa Urdu dan Arab. Angket tersebut mengandung 26 butir dan merangkum pelbagai kepercayaan perkawinan Islam. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa kepercayaan perkawinan orang Islam Qatar lebih dekat dengan kepercayaan Islam tulen berbanding dengan kepercayaan orang Islam Pakistan. Temuan penelitian ini mencerminkan kesan budaya orang asli terhadap kepercayaan berkaitan perkawinan orang Islam Pakistan.

Keywords: *Islam; Marriage; Beliefs; Pakistan; Qatar.*

Introduction

Marriage is a global practice (Baffour-Awuah, 2014). The prime objective of marriage is to satisfy sexual and emotional needs and to form a family (Burgess & Locke, 1945; Uddin, 2009). The status and role of each spouse is an essential aspect of marital life (Dyer, 1983). Belief is the mental acceptance and conviction in the truthfulness of an idea (Stephens & Graham, 2004). Beliefs can be developed by direct experiences or by accepting information from a trusted or authoritative source (Langdon, 2013). It is not necessary for beliefs to be present in one's consciousness all the time; these can be hidden in the unconscious, too (Connors & Halligan, 2015). Beliefs can be subjectively related to an individual alone and can be accepted by many people (Freeman, 2007). Beliefs can vary in the degree of certitude (Peters et al., 2004; Seitz et al., 2016; Usó-Doménech & Nescolarde-Selva, 2016). Beliefs become bases for behaviors (Blair et al., 2004; Greenberg et al., 2005; Parker et al., 1996; Tullett et al., 2013).

The influence of culture on human behavior and relationships has been well established. One of the many purposes of marriage is to uplift society through the institution of marriage (Eekelaar, 2007). Culture plays a vital role in romance, dating, mate selection, marital readiness, marriage, marital roles, marital sexual practices, divorce, extramarital experiences, infidelity, and other related aspects of marital life (Cast & Bird, 2005; Connolly & McDonald, 2019; Husain & Nadeem, 2022; Husain & Imran, 2020; Husain & Qureshi, 2016; Husain & Gulzar, 2015; Lehr Essex, Elizabeth & Hong, 2005; Regan et al., 2004). The influence of culture on marital life can also be observed through the formation of different family types (nuclear, joint, extended, etcetera) across individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Ember & Ember,

2002). Religion and culture, however, are always mixed up with each other (Beyers, 2017). Cultural beliefs come specifically from a geographic location, whereas religion cut across geographic bounds (Minton et al., 2015). Therefore, the role of religion in marital adjustment is highly crucial (Hünler & Gençöz, 2005; Inzlicht et al., 2011). Higher religiosity reduces the chances of divorce (Booth et al., 1995; Sullivan, 2001) and infidelity (Dollahite & Lambert, 2007).

Islam has addressed several aspects and issues of marital life in detail (Ahmad, 2018; Syed, 2008) and has carefully guided couples. Marriage, in Islam, is considered a sacred (Jaafar-Mohammad & Lehmann, 2011; Munir, 2011) and rewardable (Alghafli et al., 2014) obligation (Mehmood & Fazi, 2016). Islam has declared specific compulsory and complimentary duties and responsibilities for both spouses. The husband is assigned the role of providing the necessities of life to the wife and children, providing food, accommodation, clothing, and protection to his wife and children. He is also responsible for supporting his family in every matter; being kind to his wife; being attractive to his wife by adoring and cleaning himself; to fulfill the sexual needs of his wife; and staying faithful to wife (Ahmad, 2018; Al-Kawathari, 2008; Azad & Sharmin, 2018; Dogarawa, 2009; Lemu, 1987; Maqsood, 1995). A wife, in Islam, is expected to give respect and affection to her husband; beautify herself for the husband; fulfill the sexual needs of her husband; and be loyal to her husband (Ahmad, 2018; Al-Kawathari, 2008; Bani & Pate, 2015; Dogarawa, 2009; Maqsood, 1995).

Islam is practiced by people who belong to distinct cultures of the world (Jaafar-Mohammad & Lehmann, 2011). Muslims around the globe have developed several religious misconceptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of husband and wife. They usually do not distinguish between culture and religion and mingle cultural traditions with religious beliefs and practices (Jaafar-Mohammad & Lehmann, 2011; Syed, 2008). The practices of today's Muslims, therefore, must be distinguished from the original teachings of Islam (Syed, 2008).

Islamic teachings regarding marriage, having an essential role in Pakistani marriages (Qadir et al., 2005), are still influenced by Hindu culture (Juni et al., 2014). As a result, Pakistanis have developed misconceptions and mixed traditional practices with Islam (Mehmood & Fazi, 2016). Considering female's consent for marriage as unnecessary, initiating marital proposal by a female or her family members, prohibiting the pre-marital meeting of the spouses, considering dowry as the responsibility of a female or her family, preferring a

joint-family system for the married couple, prohibiting family planning, hitting or beating the wife, and allowing marital rape are some examples about how people use Islam to prevail cultural traditions involved in the marriage (Abbasi et al., 2020; Ali et al., 2009; Dogarawa, 2009; Farooqi, 2017; Husain, 1967; Jaafar-Mohammad & Lehmann, 2011; Makino, 2019; Maqsood, 1995; Mir & Shaikh, 2013; Qadir et al., 2005; Riaz, 2013; Roudi-Fahimi, 2004; Zakar et al., 2013).

The earlier literature did not reveal any study that compared marital beliefs among Muslims from different cultural backgrounds. The current study, therefore, was carried out to investigate the impact of culture on the marriage-related beliefs of Pakistani Muslims. The beliefs of Pakistani Muslims regarding marriage were compared with the beliefs of Qatari Muslims. Qatar is an Arab Muslim country that is governed by Islamic teachings. Islam is the moral anchor of Qatari society (Caeiro, 2018). The lifestyle of Qataris is highly influenced by Islam (Ottosen & Berntsen, 2014). The study intended to compare the marriage-related beliefs of Pakistani and Qatari Muslims to know the possible influence of culture over religious beliefs. The current study is the first of its nature. It would help sensitize Muslim researchers from other cultures to analyze the compatibility of Muslims from different cultures with authentic Islamic beliefs related to marriage and marital life.

Method

Participants

The study involved 519 participants, including men (n=264) and women (n=255). These participants were selected through a convenient sampling technique. Since any sources did not fund the study, the researchers tried to involve as many participants as voluntarily as possible. The participants included 458 Pakistanis and 61 Qataris. In addition, 185 were unmarried, 302 were married, and 32 were widows. All the participants were Muslims. Their age ranged between 15 to 75 years, with a mean of 35 years. Except for 13 illiterate participants whom the researchers facilitated, all the rest were educated enough to respond to the study questionnaire. Their education ranged from primary schooling to doctorate. The disproportionate comparison between 458 Pakistanis and 61 Qataris was statistically supported by analyzing the effect size through Cohen's *d*.

The Instrument

A specific questionnaire was designed for the current study in Urdu and Arabic. The questionnaire comprised 26 items based on authentic Islamic beliefs related to marriage and marital life. These beliefs were retrieved from three sources which are mostly considered authentic to Muslims. These three sources were Quran (Verses 2:187,221,229,231,233,236,237; 4:4,20,21,25,34; 24:31; 30:21; 60:10, 65:2,6,7) Sahih Bukhari (Hadiths 893, 5049, 5063, 5065, 5136, 5208, 5232, 5273) and Sahih Muslim (Hadiths 1218, 1400, 1401, 1440, 1714, 1829, 2172, 4965). These beliefs covered a wide range of matrimonial aspects, including (a) beliefs on the importance of marriage in Islam, e.g. marriage as compulsory and as a good deed; (b) beliefs on the pre-marital issues, e.g. the meeting of prospective bride and groom before marriage, the consent and free will of both bride and groom, the dowry, the condition from bride to restrict groom from polygyny, the prohibition for bride from marrying a non-Muslim, and family planning; (c) beliefs on husband's responsibilities, e.g. the living expenditure of wife and children; (d) beliefs on wife's responsibilities, e.g. beautifying herself for husband, gratifying the sexual needs of the husband and protecting his household; (e) beliefs on marital roles, e.g. mutual love and respect between the spouses is essential, the issues of dominance and submission; and (f) beliefs on divorce, e.g. wife's possessions after divorce and social stigma associated with divorce. The questionnaire could be responded by the participants on a 5-point Likert scale, i.e. extremely false, slightly false, do not know, slightly true, and extremely true. The questionnaire was initially developed in Urdu and was later translated into Arabic by a bilingual translator. A panel approved the translated and original versions of the questionnaire of 3 bilingual translators.

Procedure

The researchers approached the participants in different educational institutions, government offices, and private firms in Pakistan and Qatar. Respondents were informed about the study's objective, and consent to participate was taken appropriately. The confidentiality of participation was also ensured. All the procedures in this study were under the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments.

Analysis

The data gathered was recorded in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. It was cleaned by analyzing missing values, unengaged responses, outliers, linearity, same cases, skewness, and kurtosis. IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20, was used to analyze the data. Cronbach's alpha value measured the reliability of the questionnaire. Skewness, kurtosis, and actual and potential range of the questionnaire was also measured. Descriptive statistics were run to get the percentages. A T-test was applied to make comparisons based on gender and nationality. Cohen's d was also used to analyze the effect size. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to find correlations between matrimonial beliefs with age and education. ANOVA was run to compare unmarried, married, and widowed. Eta square was also used to measure the effect size in this regard.

Findings

The findings revealed that the overall marital beliefs of Qataris were significantly closer to the authentic Islamic beliefs than those of Pakistanis (table 1; $M=109.782$, $SD=11.263$ vs. $M=113.525$, $SD=8.376$; $p=0.013$; Cohen's $d=0.341$).

Table 1. Nationality-based differences in marital beliefs (N=519)

Variable	Pakistanis (n=458)		Qatari (n=61)		t(145)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Overall Beliefs	109.782	11.263	113.525	8.376	2.504	0.013	0.341
Importance of Marriage	8.587	1.771	8.672	1.859	0.349	0.727	0.048
Pre-marital Matters	28.718	3.691	29.607	3.402	1.781	0.075	0.243
Husband's Responsibilities	18.144	2.623	18.262	2.265	0.336	0.737	0.046
Wife's Responsibilities	13.718	1.947	14.164	1.128	1.748	0.081	0.238
Marital Roles	20.576	3.241	21.361	2.955	1.793	0.074	0.244
Divorce	20.037	3.699	21.459	2.712	2.899	0.004	0.395

Analysis based on gender revealed no significant difference between men and women for the overall marital beliefs (table 2; $M=110.197$, $SD=11.952$ vs. $M=110.247$, $SD=9.993$; $p=0.959$; Cohen's $d=0.005$). The beliefs of men, however, were significantly closer to the authentic Islamic beliefs about the importance of marriage (table 2; $M=8.864$, $SD=1.64$ vs. $M=8.322$, $SD=1.878$; $p=0.000$; Cohen's $d=0.308$) and marital roles (table 2; $M=21.068$, $SD=3.221$ vs. $M=20.255$, $SD=3.164$; $p=0.004$; Cohen's $d=0.255$) as compared to women.

On the other hand, women were significantly closer to the authentic Islamic beliefs about pre-marital matters (table 2; $M=28.299$, $SD=3.782$ vs. $M=29.365$, $SD=3.467$; $p=0.001$; Cohen's $d=0.293$) as compared to men.

Table 2. Gender-based differences in marital beliefs (N=519)

Variable	Males (n=264)		Females (n=255)		t(145)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Overall Beliefs	110.197	11.952	110.247	9.993	0.052	0.959	0.005
Importance of Marriage	8.864	1.640	8.322	1.878	3.506	0.000	0.308
Pre-marital Matters	28.299	3.782	29.365	3.467	3.342	0.001	0.293
Husband's Responsibilities	18.030	2.699	18.290	2.453	1.147	0.252	0.101
Wife's Responsibilities	13.746	1.969	13.796	1.774	0.303	0.762	0.027
Marital Roles	21.068	3.221	20.255	3.164	2.901	0.004	0.255
Divorce	20.189	3.780	20.220	3.462	0.095	0.924	0.008

Analysis based on marital status (table 3) revealed that the overall marital beliefs of the married ($M= 111.33$; $SD=10.85$) were significantly closer to the authentic Islamic beliefs ($p=0.025$; $\eta^2=0.014$) as compared with the unmarried ($M= 108.70$; $SD=11.31$) and the widows ($M= 108.50$; $SD=9.86$).

Table 3. Marital status-based variations in marital beliefs

Variable	Unmarried (n=185)		Married (n=302)		Widows (n=32)		f(516)	p	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Overall Beliefs	108.7	11.32	111.3	10.85	108.5	9.867	3.702	0.025	0.014
Importance of Marriage	8.081	2.121	8.858	1.522	9.125	1.100	12.99	0.000	0.048
Pre-marital Matters	28.89	3.629	28.87	3.625	27.94	4.235	0.996	0.370	0.004
Husband's Responsibilities	17.73	2.875	18.41	2.382	18.22	2.352	4.085	0.017	0.016
Wife's Responsibilities	13.66	2.105	13.84	1.756	13.72	1.529	0.570	0.566	0.002
Marital Roles	20.37	3.236	20.86	3.220	20.63	3.013	1.337	0.264	0.005
Divorce	19.98	3.601	20.48	3.517	18.88	4.412	3.441	0.033	0.013

The study also revealed a significant positive correlation between education with the overall authenticity of marital beliefs (table 4; $r=.109$; $p<0.05$). However, the correlation of age with the overall authenticity of marital beliefs was not significant (table 4; $r=.047$; $p>0.05$).

Table 6. Correlation of marital beliefs with age and education

Variable	Age	Education
Overall Beliefs	.047	.109*
Importance of Marriage	.223**	-.060
Pre-marital Matters	-.043	.159**
Husband's Responsibilities	.094*	-.017
Wife's Responsibilities	-.011	.007
Marital Roles	.042	.041
Divorce	-.021	.172**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

The current study was carried out to investigate the impact of culture on the marriage-related beliefs of Pakistani Muslims. The beliefs of Pakistani Muslims regarding marriage were compared with the beliefs of Qatari Muslims. The findings revealed that the overall marital beliefs of Qataris were significantly closer to authentic Islamic beliefs than Pakistani beliefs. Analysis of gender revealed no significant difference between men and women in the overall marital beliefs. However, men's beliefs were significantly closer to the authentic Islamic beliefs about the importance of marriage and marital roles than women's. On the other hand, women were significantly closer to the authentic Islamic beliefs about pre-marital matters than men. Analysis based on marital status revealed that the overall marital beliefs of the married were significantly closer to the authentic Islamic beliefs than the unmarried and the widows. The study also revealed a significant positive correlation between education and marital beliefs' overall authenticity. The correlation of age with the overall authenticity of marital beliefs was not significant.

A belief is a proposition that is considered trustworthy by the believer. Beliefs play a crucial role in a person's life. A religious belief is an acceptance of the truthfulness of a religious proposition (Harris et al., 2009). Religious beliefs are based on certain principles (Durkheim & Mauss, 2017) and affect the believer's practices (Bloom, 2012). Religion and religious beliefs affect marital life significantly (Ahmadi & Hossein-Abadi, 2009; Brimhall & Butler, 2007; Fiese & Tomcho, 2001).

Culture is also a set of beliefs (Fernandez, 2007) and influences marital life significantly (Cheng, 2010; Pardo et al., 2013; Wendorf et al., 2011; Wheeler et al., 2010; Wong & Goodwin, 2009; Yasan & Gürgen, 2008). Culture shapes our behaviors (Stangor et al., 2017) and guides us in how to view the world (Henslin et al., 2015). Cultures can overcome religions and serve as frameworks in which religions operate and modify based on culture (Stander et al., 1994). Therefore, religions are interpreted differently in different cultures. Religious beliefs and practices may have different levels of importance from culture to culture (Sasaki & Kim, 2011). It is quite prevalent that Islamic beliefs and practices are molded differently in different cultures (Jaafar-Mohammad & Lehmann, 2011; Syed, 2008). Even in marital issues such as choosing a partner (Ishida, 2003) and living together (Marcén & Morales, 2019), people tend to follow cultural values and role models to avoid being ostracized (Furtado et al., 2013; Kalmijn & van Groenou, 2005). The two cultures studied in the current research have significantly different backgrounds.

Pakistani culture is heavily influenced by British rule and Hindu traditions (Juni et al., 2014). Researchers have noted the adverse influences of un-Islamic cultures on the marital life of Pakistanis (Abbasi et al., 2020; Ali et al., 2009; Dogarawa, 2009; Farooqi, 2017; Husain, 1967; Jaafar-Mohammad & Lehmann, 2011; Makino, 2019; Maqsood, 1995; Mir & Shaikh, 2013; Qadir et al., 2005; Riaz, 2013; Roudi-Fahimi, 2004; Zakar et al., 2013). Qatar, on the other hand, is an Arab society that is governed by Islamic sharia (Caeiro, 2018; Ottsen & Berntsen, 2014). Both cultures claim to follow Islam. In Pakistan, however, Islamic Law is less implemented than in Qatar. Another difference between the two cultures is their languages. Qataris speak Arabic, the Quran's language, and the Prophet's traditions (peace be upon him). As a result, they are in a better position to understand Islamic laws and traditions than Pakistanis, who speak several languages and are less interested in learning Arabic.

Conclusion

The current study compared the marital beliefs of Pakistanis and Qataris and found a significant difference in this regard. The beliefs of Qatari Muslims were significantly closer to the original Islamic beliefs about marriage and marital issues. It reflects the impact of indigenous culture on the marriage-related beliefs of Pakistani Muslims. The study suggests that Pakistani Muslims refer to authentic Islamic sources themselves rather than relying on secondary sources. By consulting the Quran and the authentic traditions of the Prophet

(peace be upon him), Pakistani Muslims could understand marital beliefs and marital requirements in such a valid way that they could remove any cultural influences from their minds. Most of the faulty marital practices that have originated among Pakistanis belong to their earlier interactions with Hindus and other non-Muslim communities. Understanding the difference between religion and culture is, therefore, highly recommended.

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